

Women's Representation in Illinois

Parity Ranking: 19th of 50

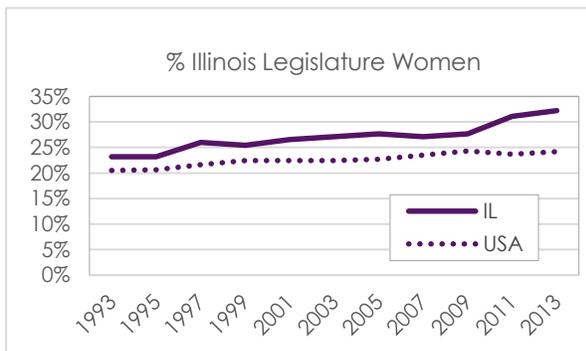
Score of 18: Six points for lieutenant governor, attorney general, and comptroller. 3 points for the percentage of female U.S. House members and 9 points for the percentage of female state legislators.

Quick Fact

A woman has not run on a major party ticket for U.S. Senate in Illinois since Sen. Carol Moseley-Braun was defeated in 1998.

Trending

Always above the national average, the percentage of Illinois' state legislators who are women has risen steadily since 1993. In 2008, Illinois ranked 18th among states in its percentage of women state legislators. Today, it ranks 6th.



Source: Center for American Women and Politics, Rutgers University.

Levels of Government

Statewide Executives

Female governors: None

Current female statewide elected executives: 3 of 6 (lieutenant governor, state comptroller, and attorney general)

Number of women to have held statewide elected executive office: 6

Congress

U.S. Senate: 0 of 2 seats are held by women

U.S. House: 4 of 18 seats are held by women

In its history, Illinois has elected one female U.S. Senator, Carol Moseley-Braun (1993-1999), who also is the only African American woman to ever be elected to the Senate. Illinois has also elected 16 women to the U.S. House, three through special elections.

State Legislature

Percentage women: 32.2%

Rankings: 6th of 50

Senate: 15 of 59 (25.4%) are women

House: 42 of 118 (35.6%) are women

Method of election: All single-member districts since 1980, when Illinois ended its use of cumulative voting in three-seat districts.

Local

None of the mayors or county executives in the five largest jurisdictions with elected executives are woman.

Words of Wisdom

"We will no longer wait for political power to be shared with us, we will take it." – Cardiss Collins, former U.S. representative from Illinois

Combatting Sexism in Illinois

When Erika Harold ran in the Republican primary for Illinois' 13th Congressional District in 2012, the last thing she expected was a sexist and racist attack from Montgomery County GOP Chairman Jim Allen. Harold, a Harvard-educated attorney and former Miss America, hoped to become the first female African-American Republican in Congress.

Allen's remarks ranged from calling Harold a "streetwalker" and the "lovechild of the DNC" to saying that she would likely lose the race and join a Chicago law firm "that needs to meet their quota for minority hires."

The Republican establishment was quick to condemn Allen. The editor of *Republican News Watch*, a Chicago-based conservative website to which Allen sent the offending e-mail, responded, "If officials in my party fail to understand how destructive it is to attack an impressive person like Erika Harold merely because she dares to challenge the good old boys, the GOP will remain a losing party for decades." Even RNC Chair Reince Priebus called on Allen to resign from his position, which he did, and issue an apology to Harold, which he did via text message.

Combating sexism is an important step towards advancing women in the political arena, since studies have found that women are often less likely to run for office because they are wary of incidences similar to this one. But in this case, the strong pushback from Republicans demonstrated a commitment to disallow if not condemn sexist statements about a woman candidate.



Elections to Watch

Lisa Madigan, who has served three terms as Attorney General, was expected to challenge incumbent Patrick Quinn in the Democratic primary for governor. But in July she announced that her father's decision to remain Speaker of the House, a position he has held for 28 of the last 30 years, led her to decide to seek re-election to avoid the problem of family members serving in those two key positions simultaneously. Gov. Quinn may run unopposed in the primary, and his most serious challengers in the general election are likely to be men. At least one strong Republican challenger, state senator Kirk Dillard, has a female running mate for lieutenant governor, as does Gov. Quinn.

Few changes are expected in federal elections. First-term U.S. Rep. Rodney Davis (R) represents the competitive 13th district. He may face both a primary challenge from Erika Harold and a general election challenge from county judge Ann Callis. Republican state representative Darlene Senger faces an uphill battle against a Democrat in the 11th district.

Notable Recent Elections

In April 2013, Robin Kelly won a U.S. House seat in a special election in Illinois' 2nd congressional district. Women hold three other U.S. House seats, including two first-term members who won in 2012: Democrats Tammy Duckworth and Cheri Bustos, who both defeated Republican incumbents in districts redrawn by the legislature in 2011 to favor Democrats.